

Graduates' First Job is to Find a Job

the Final Test



by Connie Blaine

This year's college graduates still need to pass a tough test—finding a job! For the second year in a row, the crop of new grads is facing a depressed job market, and no relief is in sight. Spring recruiting by companies on campus was down this year, and incentives, signing bonuses and high starting wages are far less common than two or three years ago. But there are bright spots in certain industries. Health care is still going strong and shows signs of growth.

Nationally, regions vary widely in the employment outlook, with the Midwest

actually growing, while the West is showing the largest decline in job opportunities for new grads. The South and Northeast also show job declines, though not as severe as the West.

Stan Inman, Director of Career Services at the University of Utah, says "The good news is that people are finding jobs, but it depends on their major, flexibility in geographic locations and other qualifications they bring to the table, such as having done an internship." He reports job searches are currently taking up to six months, in sharp contrast with the situation three years ago, when many students received offers of employment even before graduation. The occupations that were strong in the past, such as accounting and engineering, are still the strongest, although their outlook has also diminished.

Inman's best advice for seniors is, find and complete an internship in their major. Sixty percent of students who successfully complete an internship get hired by the company after graduation. For recent graduates, his advice is, "Be realistic, be flexible, and be very prepared for your interview, with a well-thought-out strategy to make your moment in the sun count." He cautions new graduates that, due to many older workers competing with them for jobs, they may need to be willing to take an entry-level job as a stepping stone, and be willing to relocate.

In today's job market, job seekers must be more flexible, more persistent, and more prepared than ever, in order to compete. Some tips:

- **Be flexible.** Be willing to relocate. The bigger the geographic area you target in your job search, the better your chances. Take an entry-level job if it can lead to better things. Be willing to accept lower pay than you would prefer.
- **Be proactive.** Don't sit by the phone, follow up each application with an inquiry in a couple of weeks if the company doesn't contact you.
- **Network like crazy.** Tell everyone you're looking for a job, and have resumes ready to give out at all times.
- **Look for similar kinds of work.** Research jobs and find those that require many of the same skills that you would use in your preferred occupation.
- **Don't forget not-for-profit organizations.** Private industry is depressed, but these may be hiring, and the experience can help you move out and up later on.
- **The federal government is not shrinking, although the state government is.** And, a huge chunk of federal employees are due to retire in the next 5-10 years.
- **Use the Career Center at your college for all the help it can offer.**
- **Tailor your resume to each position you are applying for.** Do the same with each cover letter.
- **Most of all, keep a positive attitude.** If you keep trying and applying "smart", you **WILL** get a job, eventually.

For more information:

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